

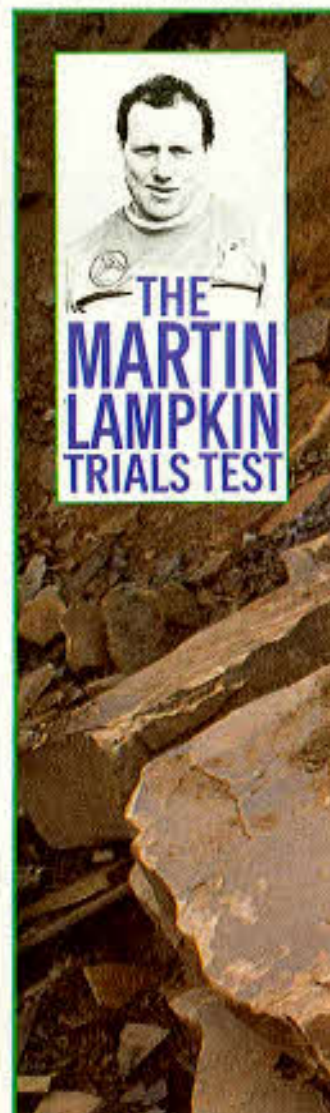
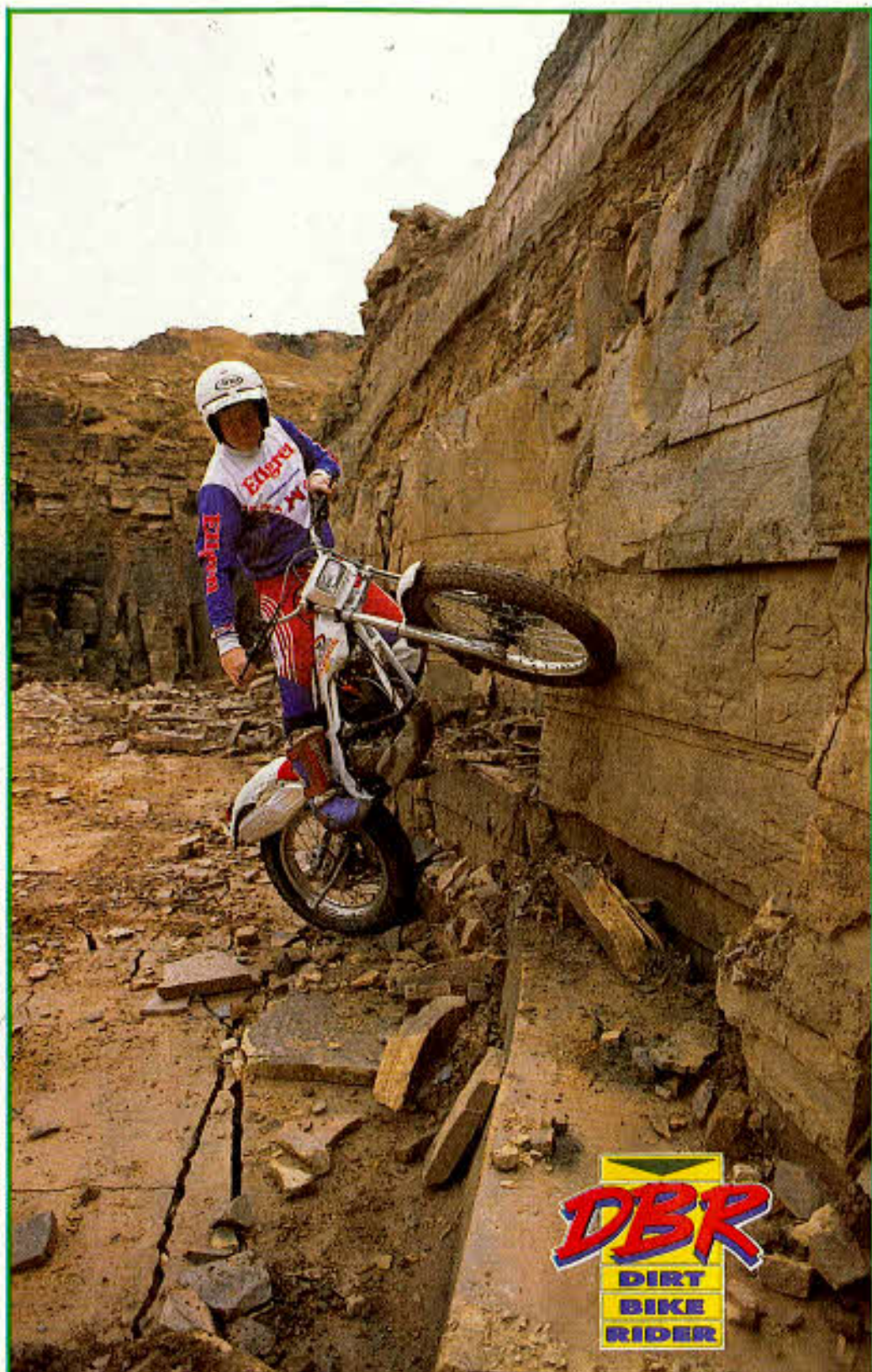
# UNIDENTICAL TWINNS

They're both Hondas, they both have similar graphics and paintwork, but the TLM250 two-stroke and RTL250 four-stroke are like chalk and cheese, as Martin Lampkin discovered. Pictures by James Moorhouse.

Looking back to last year when I tested Honda's RTL250 four-stroke and the then TLM240 two-stroke, I remember being taken aback by the respective pink and turquoise colour schemes. Certainly not what I'd become accustomed to seeing on trials machines.

However, in a year when Aprilia has produced their bright lilac coloured TXR models, Honda decided to be less flamboyant, bringing out both these trials bikes and red, white and blue paint jobs.

But the story this year is a



lot more than just new paint schemes. For a start, the two-stroke has been bored out to 250cc and there's now a disc brake at the front. Also, the four-stroke, which may not look a lot different mechanically to last year's model, is now a lot more powerful, has new Pro-Link rear suspension and disc brakes at both ends.

## TLM250R

My big complaint about the TLM240 was its lack of punch. Despite producing more power than the RTL on paper, the two-stroke just did not compete with the four-stroke when up against it in the sections.

But, as always, Honda has responded to criticism, increasing both power and torque thanks to the extra capacity and a number of engine mods.

It's now a more buzzy and responsive engine; not on par with the RTL when really up against it in world championship class sections, but for normal trials use it delivers.

I like the TLM's riding position, it feels

comfortable, even for larger riders like myself. Only complaint is that the front end feels a bit low. The footpegs are well back and it's light at the front, nicely set up for modern style riders. Indeed, it's a highly manoeuvrable machine with superb steering and a lively back end, too, that will work well in the hands of riders with trick riding ability. Not my own particular style, maybe, but I have to say that the TLM would get up all of the big steps I tried with the RTL.

There's now a disc brake at the front but, unlike the RTL the rear drum is retained. I personally feel this is the best possible combination. The disc is superb, being forceful, but responsive. At the rear, however, I prefer the TLM's rear drum to the RTL's new disc.

Control-wise the TLM is excellent. The clutch is not quite so light as the RTL's superbly light example, but then again the gearbox operation is better than the four-stroke's.

Certainly a bike for the



## UNIDENTICAL TWINS

rider who wants something different to the usual Fantic, Beta or Yamaha, the TLM doesn't really compete with them on price, having a recommended retail price of £3749, including VAT.

### RTL250S

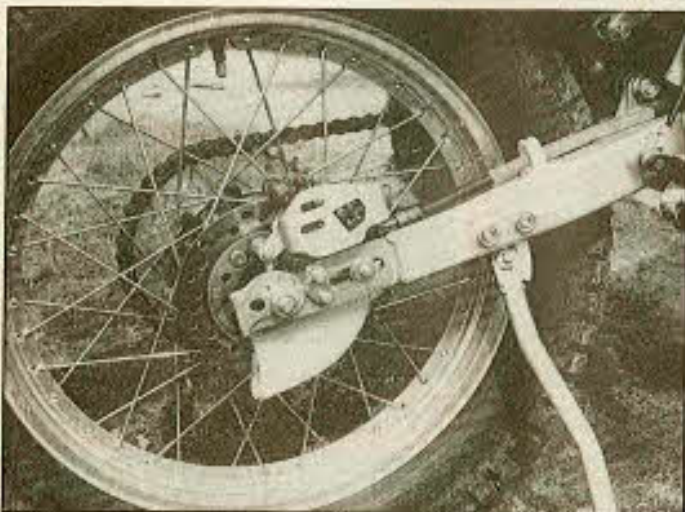
I've said it before and I'll no doubt say it again, but in my opinion the RTL250 Honda is without doubt the ultimate trials machine.

The buying public also thinks so too, because despite a £4598 price tag, all 15 examples brought into this country have already been sold. Get your order in early for 1989 if you've got the cash to spare and want a guaranteed winner.

I've ridden an RTL in the



With suspension improvements for 1988 the RTL250 is still the ultimate trials machine.



This year's RTL has disc brakes at both ends. The rear, as you can see, is well protected.

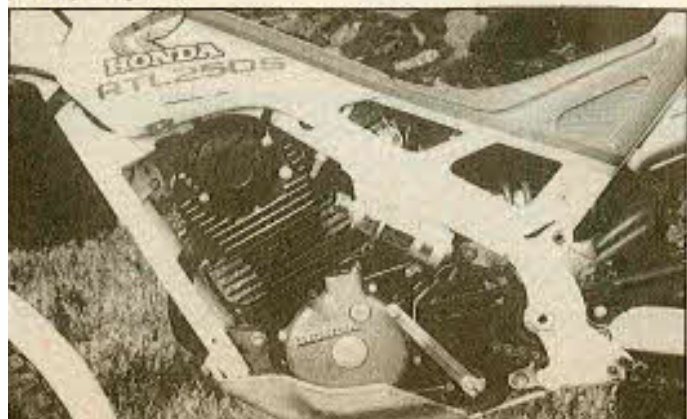
Scottish Six Days Trial for the past couple of years and I firmly believe that it's the bike alone that has lifted me from an expected result around 20th place to the 12th I've achieved each time.

The suspension was fairly close to perfect and with the improvements for 1988 I just cannot fault it at all. It's just so effective; no matter how tough the section if you can

hang on the RTL will keep on pointing straight.

Take, for example, Witches Burn in the Scottish. It's a 15 foot cross between a slab and a rock step. Many is the time I've sat at the bottom with a two-stroke wondering if I'll get up. But with the RTL I really look forward to riding it, I'm just so full of confidence, which is half the battle with trials riding

The RTL's overhead-camshaft four-stroke engine is a lot more punchy this year.



anyway.

Interestingly, for '88 there's a big plastic shield over the new rear suspension linkage which stops most of the muck getting in and has got to prevent excessive wear and tear.

The RTL is a small bike and I'm a big bloke but somehow I don't really feel too cramped. Only alteration I've made to the riding position on my own machine is to fit bigger handlebars; no need to alter the footrests.

The engine is quite a lot more powerful than last year's pink machine. This is, however, usable power in the main, although non-expert riders might find it less forgiving. Having said that, this is not a machine for the novice, anyway.

Power is very usable in the first three gears, and it will pull fourth on, say, a loose climb. Last year's bike was prone to spitting and even stopping if you opened it up

quickly, but my own bike never did it once in Scotland neither did the test machine. It was a problem that needed sorting; it lost me a few marks, but Honda seem to have done the trick.

All in all the RTL is a superb bike. It's extremely well put together with quality materials and is a delight to ride. It's agile, manoeuvrable, steers well and will go anywhere that you've the confidence to tackle.

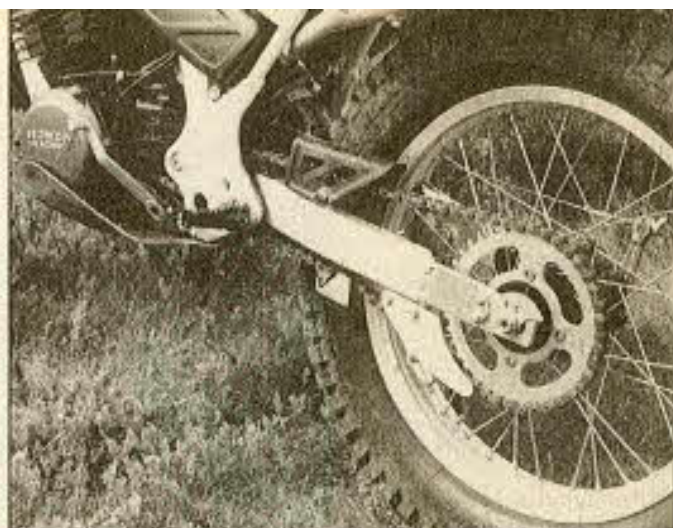
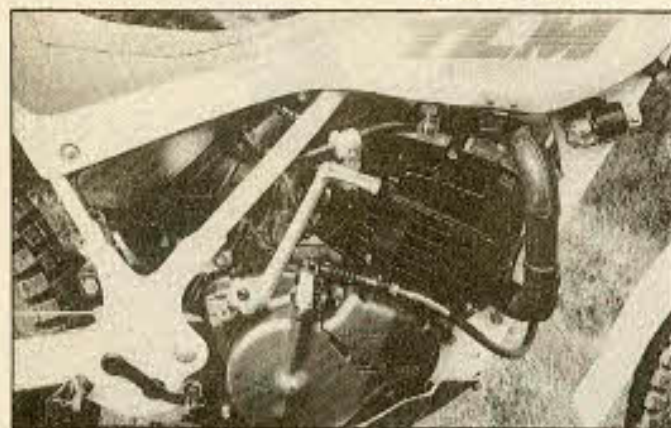
I guess I'm biased because I've bought one myself. I don't ride on a regular basis and I'll only be competing for a couple more years so I've gone for the bike that will give me the most enjoyment. That doesn't detract in any way from the modern generation of two-strokes which are highly competitive — and more realistically priced. Without doubt the RTL is the ultimate trials machine — which it should be at £4598.



Agile and manoeuvrable, the TLM will perform well in the hands of a trick riding specialist.

## UNIDENTICAL TWINS

Now bored out to 250cc, the TLM's two stroke engine is a relatively torquey unit.



No rear disc on the TLM but its drum is impressive. Exhaust is bulbous but lighter than last year.

## TECHFAX

AS the name implies, the TLM250 is essentially a larger capacity version of last year's 240 model. Bored out from the 240's 236cc single cylinder power unit, the 74x58mm two-stroke is more powerful — up one bhp to 15.7 — and has increased torque over the 240. This is now up to 2.5 kg/m at the relatively low 3000 rpm — a 2000 rpm drop from last year's bike.

The extra capacity obviously plays a major part in this, but the engine features a new crankshaft and cylinder head plus a new cylinder barrel with extensively reworked porting.

Frame is the same part tubular, part box-section all-steel unit. However, the box-section steel swingarm has been changed along with the rear shock, which is adjustable for spring pre-load and damping.

Front forks are slightly revised but the biggest change to the front-end is the fitting of a 186mm disc brake. Braking at the rear end is, like the 240, by drum.

The bigger engine has helped increase dry weight by 2kg to 86, but Honda has trimmed down the flab in one area by junking the previously obese rear silencer in favour of a lightweight aluminium unit.

An exclusive machine — Honda has brought in only 20 units — the TLM250 has a price tag of £3749 including VAT. Even so, that's a lot cheaper than the even more exclusive (only 15 in the country) RTL250 four-stroke, which costs a cool £4598.99. And, as we said last year, that makes it by far the costliest trials machine on sale in this country. It's also the best.

Paintwork has changed, with last year's garish pink, white and lilac being dropped in favour of more respectable red, white and blue. But, although it may not look mechanically much different to the '87 model, there are in fact a number of significant alterations.

For a start there's a new frame along with longer box-section alloy swingarm, new multi-adjustable shock and revised Pro-Link suspension linkage. Disc brakes are used at both ends in place of the '87 model's drums and there are new front forks. Rear wheel is changed also to accept a tubeless rear tyre.

Alterations to the overhead camshaft single cylinder four-stroke engine are quite extensive with a new cylinder and crankcase. Power output is up from a relatively puny 13.8bhp to a punchy 16.2 at 7000 rpm, while torque remains the same at 2.05 kg/m, albeit further up the rev range at 5000 rpm.



### HONDA RTL 250S

#### SPECIFICATIONS

Price (inc VAT)	£4598.99
Engine	Single cyl, air cooled, four-stroke
Capacity	249cc
Bore & stroke	70 x 64mm
Carburation	Keihin
Ignition	CDI
Max power (claimed)	16.2bhp @ 7000rpm
Max torque (claimed)	2.05 kg/m @ 5000rpm
Transmission	six speed
Clutch	wet, multiplate

#### CYCLE PARTS

Tyres: Michelin	
Front	2.75 x 21
Rear	4.00 x 18 (tubeless)
Brakes:	
Front	Disc
Rear	Disc
Suspension:	
Front	Air-assisted telescopic
Rear	Pro-link monoshock, adj spring pre-load and damping

#### DIMENSIONS

Weight	85kg
Wheelbase	1315mm
Ground clearance	305mm
Seat height	720mm
Fuel capacity	3 litres
Machine supplied by: Honda (UK) Ltd, Power Road, Chiswick, London W4 5YT. Tel: 01-747 1400.	



### HONDA TLM 250R

#### SPECIFICATIONS

Price (inc VAT)	£3749
Engine	Single cyl, air cooled, two-stroke
Capacity	249cc
Bore & stroke	74 x 58mm
Carburation	Keihin
Ignition	CDI
Max power (claimed)	15.7bhp @ 5000rpm
Max torque (claimed)	2.5kg/m @ 3000 rpm
Transmission	six speed
Clutch	wet, multiplate

#### CYCLE PARTS

Tyres: Michelin	
Front	2.75 x 21
Rear	4.00 x 18
Brakes:	
Front	186mm Disc
Rear	Drum
Suspension:	
Front	Air-assisted telescopic
Rear	Pro-link monoshock, adj spring pre-load and damping

#### DIMENSIONS

Weight	86kg
Wheelbase	1320mm
Ground clearance	315mm
Seat height	750mm
Fuel capacity	3.5 litres
Machine supplied by: Honda (UK) Ltd, Power Road, Chiswick, London W4 5YT. Tel: 01-747 1400.	